



As the Fires Fall



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Chapter 1 by Jonn Louie Lim

The crisp cold air blew gently at the building's rooftop. Coming out of the stairwell, Raide shuddered as his body adjusted to the season's cool weather. It's not as if it weren't welcome. He came up here for that very reason, to get some fresh air. You don't get much of it in the city, and he needed a clear head after all that's been happening recently.

Chapter 2 by Kitiōn



Raide wondered why the City could not be as uncomplicated as the countryside, and with a shrug started to take a walk through the woods.

The air was crisp & his lungs had not adjusted yet so there was a slight pain, and the more he continued the more his system became relaxed. Since he was brought up with nature it was natural for him to have an affinity with it, but working in the City was a necessary evil that he could not avoid.

He started to think about the situation he left back at the offices of his work, and tried hard to reconcile himself with the belief that he had done right, and that as a lawyer he was bound by the Hippocratic oath to do what was ethical, regardless of what everybody around him thought.

Raide momentarily stopped in a clearing & took in the 360 degree view - he knelt down to pickup a handful of dead leafs & thought to himself, that for the first time in his career as a criminal attorney that he felt the criminal.

Chapter 3 by Abhwarva



Criminal Attorney or a criminal himself? See more of Story Wars more after the events of the last night.

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It all started with Susan and his undying love for the woman who wouldn't give him the time of the day. However, yesterday all things changed when she turned up on his doorstep teary-eyed at midnight and knocked like a maniac.

He was just wrapping up his work and about to call it a night when the sudden frenzied knocking caught him by surprise. He looked through the window and gasped in shock to see Susan in such a dishevelled condition, standing there and knocking on the main door like a mad-woman.

Raide opened the door and she stepped in and rushed right into his arms, just like he had imagined in his dreams, except this time around she was crying and shrieking hysterically.

"Calm Down, please calm down. What happened?" Raide said.

He helped her to a chair and poured a glass of water for her. She sipped less and spilled more and was gesticulating wildly with her hands.

"Please Susan what happened? Why are you in this state? Has anybody troubled you? Please tell me. I can help you. Or do you want me to call the police?" he said to her.

At the mere mention of the word police, she started sobbing even more uncontrollably and it took a massive bear-hug on Raide's part to control her and her hysterical sobs.

Chapter 4 by intellikat



"It's Benjamin," she gasped, choking on the words. "I'm going to lose him."

"Here. Come, sit down. Please." She did. "You're going to lose Benjamin. How? What do you mean?"

"His father. He's made... a third motion to obtain. I can't keep... fighting him. I don't have any savings left. And he's... he's using what he knows against me. My financial state. My medical condition. Everything. Oh Raide" Susan collapsed into herself. "You let someone in. For twelve

years. Of your life. They know everything about you. Everything you entrust them with. Every intimate detail. And then They use it against you. They use it against me. They use it against Susan. And Raide waited.

"I'm so sorry Susan"

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"I don't know what to do. What can I do? What can I do."

Raide went to the kitchen and filled a glass from the water purifier. He opened a cabinet and pulled a tin from behind several other glasses. From the tin he lifted a small plastic bag the size of a teabag which contained a whitish-blue powder, and emptied it into the glass of water.

"Susan. Drink this." He sat down beside her. He lifted a hand hesitantly and placed it near her shoulder blade, feeling the roughness of her garment over the bone. "What can I do? How can I help you?"

She sipped from the glass and looked straight ahead without speaking.

"How can I help you?" he repeated.

She turned to him, and he let his hand follow her turning body to rest gently at the bend of her arm.

"He won't stop. He won't stop until he has Benjamin. If he takes him away, I have nothing to live for."

Raide looked down to see the faint pink marks along her forearm and wrist. The marks that now her ex-husband was using against her to take their son away.

"Don't say that, Susan."

"Help me, Raide."

"How?"

"Can you... can you look at the case again? Can you see if there's something my lawyer has missed? I don't think he's very thorough. I don't think he really cares at all for me."

Raide nodded. But he had already looked over everything. Several times.

"Of course I will. But Susan, if I don't do this, no one else can do."

See more of Story Wars

Susan began crying again. But Raide didn't mind. He just sat and softly said he was sorry over and over again. But something inside him felt so wretched. Even now, his feelings were confusing him. He felt genuine sorrow for her. And he thought he truly loved her as well.

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But there was nothing to be done, and now he knew that it was purely his desire for her that was overwhelming any tenderness. He knew he should call a taxi and send her home safely. Or, risking it, put her to bed while he slept dutifully on the couch. But the urge to... take advantage? Of the situation, was it? He felt a sharp cut of guilt. His mind raced as he held her close and felt her chest moving with open sobs below him. His mind would not win this battle. It never had before. His hand moved to her side, and then gently, still tenderly, to her breast. She did not reject his touch. Her lips found his neck in a quick soft kiss that told him it was okay, and his guilt fled away into the night.

She lay on his bed as he sat at the foot, flipping through his phone. She was resting heavily now. The sleeping aid had no doubt taken its effect, and this was a good thing. When she woke, she would be in a better state, he told himself. He looked at her calm, beautiful body in the moonlight, unsure of how to hold the moment in memory. It was one never to be had again. The first time they had shared a night together. He wanted to extend this moment through the rest of life; this being only the first.

Raide thought again of Susan and her situation, and suddenly an idea presented itself that might not have if not related to the state he now found himself in. The passion of men leads to many things; so it was for him now. He searched through the numbers on his phone as he exited the bedroom. Finding what he was looking for, he punched a series of numbers in and held his breath.

A voice on the other end of the line spoke.

"Hullo?"

"This is Raide Evans." A pause. "Do you remember me?"

"Of course, Mr. Evans."

"You told me once that if I ever needed help of a particular kind, the kind that might get me out of a situation I couldn't get out of, you would help me."

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"I do remember saying that."

"I need your advice now. And maybe your help."

"We should meet. Outside the city."

"West Ome?"

"9am, tomorrow morning. Can you be there?"

"Yes."

He fell asleep holding Susan, thinking about what it was he was about to do. In the early morning, he texted his plan for her to read when she woke, and then he dressed quietly. He could reach the countryside in under two hours and still be able to see his father before returning. He jerked on a windbreaker and took his bag from the hallway entry.

Before escaping the city, he returned to the law offices. There was no point in disguising his weekend entry. Though the building was deserted, the gate guard the the many cameras would record this visit. But it did not matter. What he was going to do would be untraceable, and inconsequential in the larger plan.

He accessed his office terminal and searched the database for Susan's ex-husband. Raide had signed a confidentiality agreement, and a clause which restricted the use of such information to relevant cases only, but that didn't matter now. Not in light of the larger plan.

Raide printed out the man's file. Addresses, contact info, personal bio. He slipped it into his bag and departed the building, crossed the bridge in his car and headed for the autumn colours of West Ome.

Chapter 5 by Elice Bea



Suddenly, with a quick snap in his mind that put two and two together, he suddenly knew what was REALLY going on: A Scam.

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